



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Region 7 - Alaska

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News

For Immediate Release

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HELP MINIMIZE THE DISTURBANCE OF WALRUSES ALONG THE CHUKCHI SEA COAST

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking your support and cooperation in minimizing disturbances to walrus herds along the Chukchi Sea coast of Alaska.

Walruses are known to congregate on isolated beaches and barrier islands along Alaska's Chukchi Sea coast in late summer when concentrations of sea-ice are low. Known concentration areas include: Cape Lisburne, Corwin Bluff, Point Lay and Icy Cape. Please consult with FAA regarding any temporary flight restrictions in these areas.

WALRUSES ARE SENSITIVE TO HUMAN DISTURBANCES. Walruses often flee haulouts in response to the sight, sound, or odor of humans or machines. Trampling deaths associated with disturbance events are one of the largest known causes of natural mortality among walrus. Frequent or prolonged disturbances may even result in long term haulout abandonment.

DISTURBING WALRUSES IS AGAINST THE LAW. Operating an aircraft in a manner which results in disturbing, harassing, herding, hazing, or driving of walruses is prohibited under provisions of the Marine Mammals Protection Act and Federal Airborne Hunting Act.

YOU CAN HELP MINIMIZE DISTURBANCES TO WALRUSES RESTING ALONG THE COAST.

Walrus are particularly sensitive to changes in engine noise and are more likely to stampede off beaches when planes turn or fly low overhead. To prevent unnecessary disturbances, please follow these general guidelines when operating aircraft near walrus herds along the coast:

Fixed wing aircraft should remain at altitudes greater than 1,500 feet above ground level (AGL) while within 1/2 mile of walrus groups. Please avoid circling over or turning near a walrus haulout.

Helicopters should remain at altitudes greater than 3,000 feet AGL when traveling within one (1) nautical mile of a haulout.

If cloud conditions necessitate flying lower than these recommended altitudes, please pass well inland to avoid flushing walruses from the beach.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION.

To report incidences of harassment contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement: 1-800-858-7621

For questions contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management

Toll free: 1-800-362-5148; fax 786-3816